



HOUSE OF LORDS

25 October 2021

The Rt Hon the Baroness Evans of Bowes Park

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Lords
House of Lords

Cc: Lord Gardiner of Kimble, Senior Deputy Speaker

Dear Baroness Evans

Delivering COP26 across Government – Government engagement

I am writing to you in my role as Chair of the Lords Environment and Climate Change Committee in relation to the Committee's current inquiry, '*Delivering COP26 across Government*'. Unfortunately, we have experienced an unsatisfactory level of Government engagement since the inquiry was launched in June 2021 and I thought it right at this point to write to you as Leader of the House.

In June, we approached the Cabinet Office to organise an evidence session with the Rt Hon Alok Sharma MP, President of COP26. Despite the Committee's flexibility with dates, we were informed that he would be too busy with COP26 negotiations to take part in an evidence session. Instead, the Committee was informed that an evidence session could be arranged with the Rt Hon Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park, the Lords Minister with responsibility for COP26, and with the Rt Hon Kwasi Kwarteng MP, the Secretary of State at the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), which is the lead department on climate change policy. The evidence session was arranged for 14 September.

Shortly before the summer recess, the Committee was informed that Lord Goldsmith would be too busy with the Environment Bill to join the session on 14 September. Some weeks later and with very little notice, we were told that Kwasi Kwarteng was not willing to be the only Minister on the panel because BEIS is not responsible for delivering COP26. Therefore, we were then forced to cancel this session to the frustration of Members.

The Committee secured a replacement evidence session with Lord Goldsmith and the CEO of COP26, Peter Hill, which took place on 14 October. Although I am grateful to Lord Goldsmith and Mr Hill for taking part in the session, the session took place a month later than planned and just two weeks before COP26, which limited the effectiveness of the Committee's scrutiny.

The Committee subsequently discovered that Alok Sharma appeared before the APPG on Renewable and Sustainable Energy on 14 September, the date we had originally agreed for the evidence session with Lord Goldsmith, and in light of this the Committee were



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concerned that Mr Sharma had been said to be too busy with negotiations to appear before a Select Committee on the same day.

On a separate but related matter, through written evidence from the Department for Education received as part of the inquiry, the Committee became aware that Alok Sharma had sent letters to departments about their COP26 responsibilities. Given the relevance of such letters to the inquiry, we asked the Cabinet Office for sight of these letters in July. Despite efforts by the Committee staff to get copies of the letters in the intervening months, as of 22 October the Cabinet Office has not shared copies of the letters.

The Committee's inquiry has been focused on the steps the Government is taking to ensure that all departments are embedding climate change considerations in their processes, developing climate-credible policies, and contributing to a successful COP26 outcome. Given the cross-government subject of the inquiry, a desirable level of Government engagement would have involved evidence sessions with Ministers from multiple Government departments, but the President of COP26, Alok Sharma, and the Secretary of State at BEIS, Kwasi Kwarteng, would not agree to appear before the Committee. The Cabinet Office's failure to give the Committee sight of letters sent to departments, even on a confidential basis, reinforces the unsatisfactory level of Government openness and constructive engagement with the inquiry.

I am disappointed to be writing this letter to you, but I feel that I have no other option. The Committee has not been able to carry out adequate levels of scrutiny in this area as a result of poor Government engagement. I would be grateful if you could raise the issue with your Ministerial colleagues.

Sincerely,

Kate

Baroness Parminter

Chair, Environment and Climate Change Committee